

# "Metakosmos" in Ancient Texts

**Post by "Eikadistes" of December 28, 2024 at 4:54 PM**

Epicurus employs "*metakosmos*" twice in the Epistle to Pythokles without mentioning deities (10.89).

I am struggling to find mentions of it from other ancient Greek sources. *Have you found any?*

I am specifically looking for declensions of μετακοσμος and not the Latin INTERMVNDIA.

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**Post by "Eikadistes" of December 28, 2024 at 4:56 PM**

[Bryan](#) in particular, I'm wondering if you've come across it in any *P.Herc.* fragments.

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**Post by "Bryan" of December 28, 2024 at 6:05 PM**

Not quite μετακόσμος, but we have two instances of μετακοσμέω, *rearrange / modify*:

Ερίκουρος, Peri Phýseōs, Book 25, P.Herc. 1056 col. 20 (fr. B 42) ...πράττε[ι], ἀλλὰ τὰ αὐτὰ πάντ' ἔχον οὐκ [ἐξ]ἄ[ι]ρούμεθα τῆς αἰτίας τὸ ἀπ[ο]γεγ[εν]νημένον ἀλλ' ἔν τι ποιοῦν[τες] αὐ[τ]ὸ καὶ τὴν σύστασιν [ὁμοίως κα]θαίρομεν τὸ δ' οὐ νο[υ]θε[τ]οῦμέν γε, πολλὰ δὲ οὐδὲ κατὰ τινὰς ἐθισμ[ο]ῦ[ς] ἄνευ νοῦ λέξεως μετακ[ο]σ[μ]οῦμεν... τὸ γὰρ ἐξαιρού μεν[ο]ν τῆς αἰτ[ί]ας κατ' ἀνάγκ[η]ν...

Ερίκουρος, Peri Phýseōs, Book 25, P.Herc. 1191 fr. 115/116 ...ενέσθαι, ἀλλ[ὰ] κε]νὸν [καὶ] τὸ {δι' ἀνάγκην καλ[εῖ]ν προ[ὸ]ς ὧν φάτε. ἂν δὲ μ[ή] τις τοῦτο ἀποδείξει, μηδ' ἔχει ἡμῶν [τ]ι συνεργὸν μηδ' ὄρημα ἀπο[τ]ρέπειν ὧν καλοῦντες δι' ἡμῶν αὐτῶν τὴν αἰτίαν συντελοῦμεν, ἀλλὰ πάντα ὅσ[α] νῦν δι' ἡμῶν αὐ[τῶ]ν ὀνομάζοντες τὴν αἰτίαν [εἶ]ναι διαβ[ε]β[α]ιοῦμεθα πράττε[ιν] κατὰ χώραν ἀνάγκην προσαγορεύων, ὄνομα μόνον ἀμείψει.} ἔργον δ' οὐδὲν ἡμῶν μετακοσμήσει, ὡσπερ ἐπ' ἐνίων ὁ συνορῶν τὰ ποῖα κατ' ἀνάγκην ἐστὶν ἀποτρέπειν εἴωθε τοὺς προθυμουμένους παρὰ βίαν τι π[ρ]άττειν. ζητήσῃ δ' ἡ διάνοια εὐρεῖν τὸ ποῖον [ο]ῦν τι δεῖ νομ[ί]ζειν τὸ ἐξ ἡ[μ]ῶν αὐτῶ[ν] π[ι]ως [πρ]αττόμενον [μ]ὴ προθυμουμένων πράττειν. οὐ γὰρ ἔχει ἄλλο τι οὐθὲν] εἰ μὴ φά[ναι] τὸ ποῖον [κατ' ἀνάγκην] ἐστ[ί]...

which is also attested by Ερίκουρος, Peri Phýseōs, Book 25, P.Herc. 697 col. 4 (fr. A 54) ...ἀνάγκην προσαγορεύων, ὄνομα μόνον ἀμείψει, ἔργον δ' οὐθὲν ἡμῶν μετακοσμήσει, ὡσπερ ἐπ' ἐνίων ὁ συνορῶν τὰ ποῖα κατ' ἀνάγκην ἐστίν, ἀποτρέπειν εἴωθε τοὺς προθυμουμένους παρὰ βίαν τι πρ[άττειν]. ζητήσῃ δ' ἡ διάνοια εὐρεῖν τὸ ποῖον οἴον τι δεῖ νομίζε[ιν] τὸ ἐξ [ἡμ]ῶν αὐτῶ[ν] π[ι]ως [πρ]αττόμενον τῇ προθυμ[ί]αι τοῦ πρ[άτ]τειν. οὐ γὰρ ἔχει ἄλλ[λ'] οὐθὲν] πρ[άττ]ει[ν] ἢ φάγ[α]ι...

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## Post by “Eikadistes” of December 28, 2024 at 6:20 PM

### [Quote from Bryan](#)

Not quite μετακόσμιος, but we have two instances of μετακοσμέω, *rearrange / modify*:

Great find! I never caught that the verb μετακοσμέω ("to re-arrange" or "modify") is related to the noun μετακόσμιος ("between-worlds"). This sort of suggests to me that the "space between worlds" would have been perceived as a creative continuum in which re-arrangements of particles occurs.

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## Post by “Don” of December 28, 2024 at 7:36 PM

What a great find, [Bryan](#) !



And check out all the usages of that verb:

### [Greek](#)

[Eikadistes](#) : I like your characterization of that, too:

### [Quote from Eikadistes](#)

This sort of suggests to me that the "space between worlds" would have been perceived as a creative continuum in which re-arrangements of particles occurs.

  all around!!

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## Post by “Eikadistes” of December 29, 2024 at 1:58 PM

To be transparent, here's how my mind is working:

I am speculating that the notions of *Space Sanctuaries* ("between worlds") filled with *Majestic Void Dwellers* were poetic innovations of Lucretius and perhaps Philodemus (both poets who took liberties, personifying natural forces, appropriating myths, and publishing prayers).

It's not so much a matter of mutual exclusivity: I believe, hypothetically, at least, the concepts seem compatible. It's more of a question of *focus* and *intention*. Did the Greek Epicureans *actually care* about the dwelling-place of the deities? Was that query on their radar? *Or was it a moot point?*

Here's what Lucretius has to say about the (forgive my mockery) *Cosmic Retirement Centers*:

### Quote

*"[T]heir tranquil abodes which neither winds do shake nor clouds drench with rains nor snow congealed by sharp frosts harms with hoary fall: an ever-cloudless ether overcanopies them, and they laugh with light shed largely round"* (DRN 3.18-22)

*"This too you may not possibly believe, that the holy seats of the gods exist in any parts of the world: the fine nature of the gods far withdrawn from our senses is hardly seen by the thought of the mind; and since it has ever eluded the touch and stroke of the hands, it must touch nothing which is tangible for us; for that cannot touch which does not admit of being touched in turn. And therefore their seats as well must be unlike our seats, fine, even as their bodies are fine."* (Ibid. 5.146-154)

*"[N]or will you approach the sanctuaries of the gods with a calm breast, nor will you be able with tranquil peace of mind to take in those idols which are carried from their holy body into the minds of men as heralds of their divine form."* (Ibid., 6.76)

Some authors, like Cicero, gives us this idea that the [Epicurean gods](#) are essentially *Space Ghosts*—invisible-to-translucent humanoid figures with objective existences that are composed of a spirit-like substance who dwell far away from the natural disasters of the stormy, terrestrial sphere—and their visual forms emanate through the universe like radio waves to the receiver that is the human mind. We observe their reality from an incredible distance, even more distant than the stars: as our eyes observe the evolution of a dying star as it goes supernova, so our minds document the movement of *Epicurean Void Dwellers* as they breathe, speak with friends, and laugh about jokes.

Lucretius helps us visualize these sorts "holy sanctuaries" that are "cloaked in ether". Even then, I internally debate whether or not he was referring to *Cosmic Spirit-Bodies* living in

*Metacosmic Paradise Compounds* versus something like "Beings that exist in the same spatial dimension as the Earth, but cannot interact with Earth matter (except for the minds of rational animals)".

Either way, given that Lucretius used *On Nature* as his source to structure *De Rerum Natura*, were these ideas *his*? Or were they truly poetic imaginings from *Epicurus'* actual propositions? Similarly, while I consider Cicero a completely unreliable and dubious source, he did attend lectures by an Epicurean scholar, and was trained under, and among other Epicureans. He has reason to exaggerate their claims as "a former friend who just 'didn't get it' and misunderstood everything", or, he could be faithfully representing their claims. I'm willing to swallow either pill.

I really want more fragments from the Kathegemones, Demetrios of Lakonia ( [Bryan](#) that's why I tagged you), and Philodemos that make explicit claims about the God or gods or divine nature. Most of our fragments from the Kathegemones are preserved in Philodemos' *On Piety*, which is great, yet not only is it, itself, fragmented, but also, the quotations are few, and limited, and completely intermixed with Philodemos' personal extrapolations and paraphrasing. I *believe there is a line hiding in a P.Herc. somewhere that will fit the gap in this puzzle.*

It would be really telling if Epicurus dropped a line or two that incontrovertibly demonstrate that he had curiosity regarding the question of "What does a *Space Ghost Apartment* look like?" versus (what I'd like to consider, more and more), "The gods are unique, mental phenomena."

(...though, now that I think about it, Philodemos records Epicurus as having described four classes of beings in the universe: 1. **Void** (*empty space*) 2. **Simple Bodies that are Indestructible** (particles) 3. **Bodies Arranged in Indestructible Configurations Made from Similar Kinds of Simple Bodies** (*i.e. the bodies of the gods*), 4. **Bodies Arranged in Destructible Configurations Made from a Variety of Simple Bodies** (*molecules, organs, animals, etc.*) ... hereagain, did he mean to describe the biology of *Space Ghosts*? Or was he doing his best to describe **the neurology of spirituality**?

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## Post by "Eikadistes" of December 29, 2024 at 2:03 PM

And also ... switching-gears, since the ultra-fine particles from which they are made cannot interact with any matter on Earth besides the ultra-fine particles upon which the human mind operates, why do they need to live beyond Andromeda? Why can't they just live in a *Ghost Castle in Cleveland* completely unaware of the human drama playing out in a visual spectrum they do not perceive?

Or, better yet, rather than a *Ghost Castle in Cleveland*, *why not just in the human mind*?

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**Post by “Don” of December 29, 2024 at 2:40 PM**

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

Ghost Castle in Cleveland

I'll bet I pass it on my way to work everyday 😊

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**Post by “Cassius” of December 29, 2024 at 9:05 PM**

I just watched the miniseries adaptation (with which I was not particularly impressed) of "The Martian Chronicles" and so maybe my comment is colored by my reaction to that movie. I'm referring to the third installment of that show, where the Martians were portrayed as implicitly "ghosts," or at the very least time or dimension travelers without solid existence that the earth astronaut (Rock Hudson) could touch. If I recall correctly, the Martian seemed to be viewing Rock Hudson as similarly "ghostlike."

I know you're likely speaking figuratively in including the word "ghost," and that you take the ideas here very seriously. But when that term is used those opposed to Epicurus' views to disparage the theory (as if it is no more substantive than children making up ghosts for Halloween) I don't think it's giving Epicurus proper credit at all.

I think you're right that there's no necessary reason that such beings would have to live "between worlds." The only logical requirement is that they have as means of self-regenerating in whatever environment in which they might exist.

And I'll bet we'll eventually find what you are looking for in terms of additional text references, and my wager is that when we do we'll see them being treated like atoms or the swerve -- as things that we deduce "must" exist due to things that we do observe. But I would expect that the analysis will recognize that for the same reason that we think that atoms have a limit in size (the reason is at least in part that we have never observed one), the Epicureans thought that these gods live either (1) very far away in the "intermundia," or(2) in that "parallel dimension" you're talking about (again for the reason that our five senses give us no direct feedback of them).

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**Post by “Bryan” of December 30, 2024 at 7:21 PM**

I wanted to throw in the word's entry from the Glossarium Epicureum:

## μετακοσμεῖν

ἵνα τι ἐκ γλυκέος γένηται πικρὸν ἢ ἐκ λευκοῦ μέλαν, δεῖ τοὺς συνεστακότας αὐτὸ ὄγκους μετακοσμηθῆναι καὶ ἄλλην ἀντι ἄλλης τάξιν ἀναδέξασθαι Sextus (emp.) *adv. math.* 10,43 sec. Epic. || π[ά]νπολλα δὲ οὐδὲ κατὰ τινὰς ἐθισμ[οὺς] ἄνευ νοῦ λέ[ξ]ε[ως] μετακ[οσμ.]οῦμεν Ep. *nat.* Gomperz 67 || ὄνομα μόνον ἀμείψει, ἔργον δ' οὐδὲν ἡμῶν μετακοσμῆ[ε]ι ib. 102

## μετακόσμιον

Achilles *isag.* 9, p. 132<sup>a</sup> Pet. μετακόσμια δ' ἐστὶ τὰ μεταξὺ τῶν κόσμων διαστήματα || τοῦ ἀέρος τοῦ ἐν τοῖς μετακοσμίοις Epicurei Achillis *isag.* 9, p. 132<sup>a</sup> || Hippol. 22,3 p. 572,8 D. καθῆσθαι γὰρ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τοῖς μετακοσμίοις οὕτω καλουμένοις ὑπ' αὐτοῦ· ἔξω γὰρ τι τοῦ κόσμου οἰκητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἔθετο εἶναι λεγόμενον τὰ μετακόσμια || adiectivum: ἐ]κείνην τὴν μετακόσ[μιον χώραν] Philod. *mort.* col. 15,8, p. 321 Mekleri || cf. Cic. *nat. deor.* I 8,18 'tamquam modo ex deorum consilio et ex Epicuri intermundiis descendisset' || *de divin.* II 17,40 'deos ... induxit Epicurus ... habitantis tamquam inter duos lucos sic inter duos mundos propter metum ruinarum' (adn. p. 234,1), cf. *de fin.* II 23,75 'individua cum dicitis et intermundia' || Seneca, *de benef.* IV 19 (p. 242,30 — 243,4) || inridet etiam Plut. *quaestt. conviv.* VIII 9,2, p. 731<sup>d</sup> μὴ καινὸν ἀέρα καὶ ξένον ὕδωρ καὶ τροφὰς ἀγείστους τοῖς προτέροις ἐξ ἐτέρων τινῶν κόσμων ἢ μετακοσμίων ἀποφῆναντι δεῦρο νῦν πρῶτον ἐπιρρεούσας et ib. 3, p. 734<sup>c</sup> οὐδὲν οὖν δεῖται

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**Post by “Bryan” of January 23, 2025 at 12:43 AM**

Book 25 also has "κατακ[οσ]μουμένης" (P.Herc. 1191 fr. 123)

μετακοσμείν	to rearrange	ΜΕΤΑΚΟΣΜΕΙΝ <i>change order</i>
κατακοσμείν	to arrange	ΚΑΤΑΚΟΣΜΕΙΝ <i>thoroughly order</i>